

Governor Shouldn't Have to Tell Republicans to Do Their Jobs

Written by Jeff Smith, State Senator District 31
Wednesday, 10 April 2024 10:41 -



Sen. Smith and Rep. Emerson Support Governor's call for a special meeting of the Joint Finance Committee to take action on HSHS funding and PFAS Pollution.

MADISON – Tuesday, Senator Jeff Smith (D-Brunswick) and Representative Jodi Emerson (D-Eau Claire) echoed their support for Governor Evers' call for a special meeting of the Joint Committee on Finance to approve the \$15 million to address the HSHS hospital closures and release funds to curb PFAS pollution.



"We don't have the luxury of dragging our feet with the hospital closures in the Chippewa Valley, said Sen. Smith. "This should've been done already, and there's no excuse for the delay. We shouldn't have to justify the importance for Republicans to show up to do their jobs because they've already gone through the trouble of passing the bills through both houses. Anything that happens now is just laziness, apathy or callousness."

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"We have 40,000 patients trying to line up care and 1,600 unemployed workers ready to help, but we need the \$15 million investment now," said Rep. Emerson. "It's great that we passed a bill to help with the healthcare crisis, but now we need to finish the job and actually get the money out the door and into the hands of the healthcare providers who can help the people of the Chippewa Valley. I hope that legislative Republicans are going to do the right thing for the people in my area; get the money out and not let politics get in the way of saving lives."

Rarely does the Governor call a special meeting of the joint finance committee to meet. It has only been done one other time in Governor Evers' tenure. The \$15 million grant funding for Chippewa Valley health care providers was passed into law in March, the Department of Health Services submitted their request to Joint Finance immediately and the committee has had over a month to release the funding.



Similarly, \$125 million was authorized for addressing PFAS contamination in the 2023-25 biennial state budget passed in June last year. The final step is to release the funds to the Department of Natural Resources to allow for additional testing, PFAS cleanup efforts and address drinking water concerns. Republicans passed Senate Bill 312 to specify how the money should be spent. Today, Governor Evers vetoed the bill after numerous clean water

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advocates voiced concerns about limiting the DNR's authority to enforce clean water standards and allowing polluters to deny responsibility.

Senator Smith said, "PFAS pollution is everywhere in Wisconsin, and Republicans have sat on the money to do something about it since June last year. Water pollution doesn't care what political Party you belong to – it affects everyone the same. Republicans should stop playing politics and just let the DNR do their job to protect the public."

Representative Emerson said, "Eau Claire and other communities have stepped up to act fast against PFAS, but our community could really use DNR's help to keep polluters accountable and keep our drinking water safe. It's mind-boggling that Republicans don't understand the importance of clean water and addressing PFAS now."